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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a health education program developed by Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin for students at a university health center. Three goals of the program, which was targeted at 2,000 incoming first-year students, are listed: (1) to increase student awareness of existing services related to contraception and prevention/treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); (2) to increase student knowledge about contraception and STDs; and (3) to affect attitudes about the prevention of pregnancies and STDs. Student focus groups are described as the critical method used to identify marketing strategies. Issues important to focus group participants are discussed, including privacy and confidentiality, embarrassment, advertising information, and cost of services. Student suggestions for layout and design of printed materials are also presented. Actions taken as a result of focus group discussions are described. The program evaluation is discussed and it is concluded that focus groups were reliable sources of information for planning a marketing program, and that social marketing can make a difference in bringing clients to available services. (NB)

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WHAT COLLEGE STUDENTS WANT TO LEARN ABOUT CONTRACEPTION/STD: MARKETING YOUR SERVICES

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and Marilyn J. Kile, M.S.W.

Abstract:

A successful marketing program with the intent of increasing knowledge and affecting attitudes, targeted at 2000 incoming first year students, will be described with particular emphasis on planning strategies using focus groups and a media campaign.

The presentation will include what we learned about timing, semantics, acceptable materials together with an overview of assessment strategies.

From the assessment process much was learned about changes in sexual knowledge, inhibitors to contraceptive use, comfort with discussing reproductive health, concerns about seeking reproductive health care, and the importance of privacy and confidentiality.

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WHAT COLLEGE STUDENTS WANT TO LEARN ABOUT CONTRACEPTION/STD: MARKETING YOUR SERVICES

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Sex education, ready availability of contraceptives, and openness in talking about sex will reduce unintended pregnancies according to a detailed study of thirty-seven countries by The Alan Guttmacher Institute.(1) It concluded that many factors commonly blamed in this country for the high pregnancy rates were, in fact, similar to those in countries with much lower rates.

Sexually transmitted diseases--STDs--have been at epidemic levels in the United States with an estimated 2.5 million teenagers infected annually.(2) The highest rate of gonorrheal infections occurs in individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Newer tests are confirming that Chlamydia infections are exceedingly common. Three to nine million people have recurrent genital herpes. (3) Increasing numbers of people infected with venereal warts may be at risk of more serious problems than formerly believed. (4)

Data presented by Zelnik and Kantner about age of first sexual intercourse leads us to estimate that more than half of the entering first year students at the University of Wisconsin in Whitewater are sexually active.

Whitewater, a small city of about 11,000 people in southeastern Wisconsin, is the home of one campus of the University of Wisconsin with an enrollment of about 10,000. In 1977, Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin agreed to open a clinic in the Student Health Center(3) to be jointly staffed by their organization and by the Student Health Center. In exchange for the use of our medical facility, students received free services and paid only a nominal fee for supplies. In 1977, 180 visits were recorded during the first six months of service. By 1984, the total number of visits for the year was 2900, eighty percent of which were by students.

Even with this dramatic increase in the number of visits for contraception, the total number of pregnancies remained about the same. The majority of students with pregnancies, mostly unintended, were women aged 18-20.

In 1983, we received a grant from the Metropolitan Life Foundation to develop a Health Education Program to market our services in an attempt to bring to the Health Center students at risk of unintended pregnancies and STDs. The target group was the approximately 2000 incoming first year students required to live on campus in UW-W residence halls.

The goals of the Program were: 1.) to increase student awareness of existing services related to contraception and prevention/treatment of STDs; 2.) to increase student knowledge about conception and STDs; 3.) to affect attitudes about the prevention of pregnancies and STDs.

Student focus groups were the critical method used to identify marketing strategies. Focus groups are used to assess non-rational responses--feelings, perceptions and attitudes--to assist in designing and packaging sensitive information. Our focus groups consisted of representative students who met three times with a facilitator to elicit reactions to educational materials and to identify effective marketing strategies.

Two groups met in spring 84 before the Program began and two in fall 84. The latter group provided a mid-semester evaluation of the program and reviewed additional strategies and materials. Groups had from eight to eleven members each and represented fourteen of the fifteen residence halls. Males and females were approximately equal.

The facilitator assured the students that there were no right or wrong answers and that they were not expected to talk about their own experiences but to focus on the messages presented and suggest how these messages could be marketed. Permission was obtained to videotape the sessions.

Each group discussed one of the three goals for the Health Education Program at each of the three two-hour meetings. The first meeting focused on awareness of Health Center services, the second on knowledge of conception and STDs, and the third on attitudes about the prevention of pregnancies and STDs.

Because successful marketing strategies in other ambulatory care settings have included interpersonal contact, distribution of literature, use of mass media and mailings, and group contacts, a mix of materials was presented to each focus group including brochures, posters, advertisements, and films.

Focus group participants told us that confidentiality and privacy in receiving Health Center services were key issues. Women particularly wanted to be assured that no one would have access to their records. Men were concerned about privacy. Based on this information, several steps were taken to further assure students.(7) Appointments can be made by telephone or in the privacy of a triage booth. In all printed materials, we make sure that a prominent statement addresses the fact that ALL SERVICES ARE PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL. Each professional is asked to sign a statement each year assuring strict confidentiality and recognizing a breach as reason for dismissal.

Embarrassment was another important concern. Students liked a wallet calendar because it gave them easy access to the telephone number of the Planned Parenthood clinic in the Health Center. They wanted the telephone number on posters to be large and easy to read so it would not be obvious that the number was being noted. They preferred Planned Parenthood visits to the Health Center be integrated with other routine visits and the area of Planned Parenthood services to be marked clearly so that the office could be found without asking for directions.

Men believed that all advertisements should indicate clearly that services were for both men and women.

Cost of services was important and students wanted the cost and the extent of services clearly defined in printed materials.

Students wanted to be "treated like a person, not a number." If they were presenting with an STD, they preferred not to have to repeat their symptoms or reason for a visit. Men wanted female practitioners to wear some sort of uniform and talk to them before starting an examination.

Humor seemed helpful in putting the students at ease in the focus groups and during hall presentations. But, clearly, fear of a pelvic examination by women and embarrassment of men when purchasing condoms were problems which had to be responded to by a sensitive staff.

Women were concerned about miscommunication between men and women regarding interest in sexual activity. They felt men believed them interested in sex when they were not. Men believed some materials were one-sided in this regard and they indicated that men also felt pressured to have sex.

In considering layout and design of printed materials, students preferred warm colors, large print, short and concise information, a grid format, illustrations, and folded brochures. Materials were more likely to be read if included with orientation materials when students first arrived on campus, but they did not want information on reproductive health included in any mailing to them while still at home.

All students tended to notice posters near the main entrance, near the food vending machines, and near the community television in the residence halls. Women stated that posters in the bathrooms would be read.

An earlier survey of students had indicated that students' sources of information were, most commonly and in this order, residence hall information, word of mouth, and the student newspaper. Accordingly, materials were prepared for the incoming fall class 1984 based on these answers and the information from the focus groups.

Health Center staff participated in six orientation programs for student leaders, housing staff, and first year students during the summer 1984 as the beginning of the Health Education Program. The presentations focused on Health Center services, especially those relating to sexuality. An important brochure distributed to hall directors and resident assistants at this time was "Let's Talk" which described programs directly related to the goals of the Health Education program which could be scheduled for small groups of students in the residence halls throughout the year.

When checking into the residence halls in fall 84, each entering first year student received three brochures as part of a packet from the Housing Office. These were "Choice or Chance" (a brochure featuring grid containing detailed information of the most effective methods of contraception), "STD" (a trifold brochure), and "We Care For You", (an outline of services available at the Student Health Center).

Thirty-nine one-hour programs were presented to 670 students in residence halls during the 84-85 school year. The most popular of these was the program and film "Condom Sense." Pre-film discussions actively involved students in discussing the pros and cons of condom use. The humorous film kept students coming to the program for the

entertainment value, but their anonymous evaluations indicated they appreciated the film's accurate and complete information as well as the openness of the presenters. One of the handouts used in this program, "Paternity Rights and Responsibilities," was especially popular. "Condom Sense" was shown also on campus TV and in many Human Sexuality classes.

The program on "Acquaintance Rape" featuring three trigger films provided opportunities for assertiveness training and distribution of "A Man's Guide to Preventing Acquaintance Rape," and other materials on prevention and available resources. Selected posters were placed in the residence halls and changed throughout the year. A variety of brochures were distributed through especially designed display racks in some halls.

Twenty-eight paid advertisements appeared in the weekly student newspaper. In addition, 32 fillers were run free of charge. These were short messages such as "Getting pregnant is easy. Being pregnant is not.", with a Health Center signature.

The Health Education Program was evaluated by a 55-unit computer-scored questionnaire designed to assess knowledge and attitudes. From 260 to 320 first year students took the test three different times before and during the Program: spring 84; fall 84; and spring 85.

Ad surveys were sent to 200 randomly selected students and to 100 clients each of Planned Parenthood and the Health Center.

Analysis of these tools showed a significant increase of awareness of Health Center services and in knowledge about conception comparing spring 84 (before the Program) to spring 85 (late in the Program).

Looking at specific questionnaire items, a statistically significant increased number of students agreed that they would always use birth control. The most commonly recalled advertisements were ones with the message "It's Okay to say NO."

Use of Planned Parenthood services increased with 2900 total visits in 1984 and 3500 in 1985. Condom and sponge sales also increased dramatically. On the spring 85 questionnaire, 16% of students indicated they had used sexuality related services at the Health Center, up from 11% in spring 84, a statistically significant change. The numbers using the Health Center for any reason, however, did not change significantly during this period.

In summary, evaluation showed that focus groups were reliable sources of information for planning a marketing program. Social marketing does make a difference in bringing clients to available services.

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2. Gordon, S., Scales, P., and Everly, K., The Sexual Adolescent: Communicating with Teenagers About Sex, 2nd edition, Wadsworth, Inc. Belmont, CA. 1979.

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4. Inhorn, S., Condyloma Virus Infections, Seminar: "Advances in More Recent Public Health Problems in Wisconsin," Madison, Wi., Aug. 23, 1983.

5. Zelnik, M. and Kantner, J. F., "Sexual Activity, Contraceptives Use and Pregnancy Among Metropolitan-Area Teenagers. 1971-79," Family Planning Perspectives, 12: 230, 1980.

6. Population Reports, Series J, No. 15, "A Guide to Sources of Family Planning Program Assistance," George Washington University Medical Center, Washington, D. C. 1977.

Materials Chosen by College Students

Brochures and Books

Choice or Chance (Overview of effective methods of contraception) Planned Parenthood, 17 N. State Street, Chicago 60602 .13¢.

Many Teens Are Saying No. U.S.Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Community Health Services, 5600 Fischer's Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857. Permission to reproduce.

You're What? (A brochure detailing male responsibility for pregnancies.) Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, 1046 N. 12th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233. .70¢.

You Would If You Loved Me, by Gordon, Sol. (Paperback describing most common "come on lines".) Bantam Books, Department FC, 414 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016. $1.95.

Wallet size calendar card. Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin

Mainly for Men. Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona, 127 S. 5th Avenue Tuscon, Arizona 85701-2091. .20¢.

He Doesn't Need a Prescription to Get Birth Control That Works. Planned Parenthood of New York, 810 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York. 10019.

Posters

See Planned Parenthood Before. Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin.

There Are Ways to Prevent Pregnancy. This is not one of them. Planned Parenthood of New York. $1.50.

Jimmy Used To Think a 2 a.m. Feeding Was A Late Night Pizza. Planned Parenthood of New York. $1.50.

Tom's Trading in His Car For a Whole New Set of Wheels. Planned Parenthood of New York. $1.50.

We Only Did It Once. Planned Parenthood of New York. $1.50.

Films and Videotapes

"The Simple Word." (PSA on saying no.) Department of Health and Social Services, 1 West Wilson, Madison, Wisconsin 53700.

"Acquaintance Rape" (series of 4 films) $595. O.D.N. Productions, 74 Varick Street, New York, New York 10013.

"Saying No." $325. Perennial Education, 930 Pitner Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202.

"Sexually Transmitted Diseases." $295. Milner Fenwick, Inc. 2125 Greenspring Drive, Timonium, Maryland 21093.

"Hope Is Not A Method, III." $450. Perennial Education.

"Condom Sense." $450. Perennial Education.

All prices approximate. Check for current prices and shipping and handling fees.

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